

Revising Your Essay

Good revision focuses on improving ideas, structure, and argument before correcting grammar and punctuation. Revision is not simply proofreading. It involves examining how effectively the essay answers the question and communicates its argument to the reader.



Before You Revise

Try to leave some time between writing and revising. Even a short break can make it easier to spot weaknesses, repetitions, and gaps in your argument.

When you begin revising:

- Focus on structure and argument first.
- Leave spelling, punctuation, and formatting until later.
- Read the essay several times, each time looking for a different issue.

A Revision Checklist

Ask yourself:

- Have I answered the question?
- Is every paragraph relevant to the task?
- Does each paragraph make a clear point?
- Does each paragraph focus on one main idea?
- Am I analysing and evaluating rather than simply describing?

Reverse Outlining

Reverse outlining is a useful way to examine the structure of a completed draft.

Step 1

Print the essay or use a PDF version that allows annotations.

Step 2

For each paragraph, write a brief summary in the left margin.

Try to summarise the paragraph in no more than a few words. If this is difficult, the paragraph may contain too many different ideas.

Step 3

In the right margin, write the role of the paragraph.

For example:

- Background
- Definition
- Literature review
- Example
- Analysis
- Counterargument
- Conclusion point

Step 4

Review the outline as a whole.

Look for:

- Logical sequencing
- Links between paragraphs
- Repeated content
- Paragraphs that serve the same purpose
- Sections that do not contribute directly to the argument

Questions to Ask During Revision

When reading your draft, consider:

- Can I explain the purpose of every paragraph?
- Does the essay progress logically?
- Are connections between ideas made explicit?
- Does every section contribute to the thesis?
- Have I repeated any points unnecessarily?

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